

# LITHUANIA ASSAILS MOSCOW'S TACTICS AS CONVOY ARRIVES

## DISPLAY OF SOVIET FORCE

### Republic Rejects Gorbachev's Order to Turn Over Arms but a General Obeys

By ESTHER B. FEIN

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VILNIUS, Lithuania, March 22 — Lithuanian officials sought today to sustain their claim of sovereignty even as Soviet forces rolled through town to emphasize President Mikhail S. Gorbachev's assertion that Moscow's writ still holds sway here.

As the Lithuanian authorities rejected Mr. Gorbachev's call for the surrender of private weapons as absurd, the commander of a civilian defense force acknowledged that he had turned over the unit's weapons as ordered.

The political leaders who have guided Lithuania since it proclaimed independence on March 11 accused the Kremlin again today of staging military displays to worsen tensions in the republic.

#### Republic Stands Firm

In Moscow, Mr. Gorbachev demanded that the Lithuanians drop any plans for a self-defense system and ordered the K.G.B. to reinforce Soviet border posts. [Page A8.]

The Lithuanian Prime Minister, Kazimiera Prunskiene, responded today to the Kremlin's moves by saying, "There is a concerted effort from Moscow to provoke trouble in Lithuania." She vowed that the republic would not be frightened into retracting its declaration of independence.

Her determination was echoed by others in dozens of interviews on the streets of the Lithuanian republic's capital, where people were indignant at the sight of an armored convoy rumbling through the streets.

But the head of Lithuania's civil defense agency, Gen. Ginutis Taruiskis, told angry lawmakers at a session of Lithuania's Parliament that he had begun to comply with military orders to turn over the weapons and vehicles under his command.

## Threat of Confiscation

General Taruiskis, chief of the Voluntary Society for Cooperation with the Army and Navy, said he had been summoned Wednesday night by the commander of Soviet ground forces, Gen. Valentin I. Varennikov, and informed that the weapons would be taken by force if they were not handed over voluntarily.

"I issued such an order, and all organizations handed over all weapons to military units today," General Taruiskis said. He said that as a military officer, he was obliged to obey orders.

Legislators hissed at General Taruiskis and berated him for failing to consult the Lithuanian government first. The general said he was prepared to turn over about 16,000 vehicles requested by the military.

Moscow continued its war of nerves this afternoon, dispatching a convoy of 13 armored personnel carriers, five trucks carrying military hardware, and a jeep. The vehicles moved

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through the city in an exercise that the Lithuanian Interior Ministry described as "unannounced and unusual."

The Soviet Army has been conducting unscheduled military maneuvers in Lithuania since Saturday. It has refused to inform the Lithuanian leadership of its intentions despite repeated requests.

The Lithuanian Parliament appealed tonight to the world's governments to protest the possible use of coercion or violence against the republic.

"Unfortunately, during the past few days it has become more and more evident that another state is preparing to use force against the republic of Lithuania and its citizens," the appeal said.

Prime Minister Prunskiene said she had sent several telegrams today to Moscow, including one to President Gorbachev, demanding precise details on Soviet military personnel and equipment in the republic.

About 30,000 Soviet troops are nor-

Soviet strategy is denounced as the 'law of the wolf.'

mally stationed in Lithuania, the Prime Minister said. But she said it was impossible to determine how many additional soldiers may have been brought in from neighboring regions in Byelorussia, the Ukraine and Kaliningrad Oblast, a small part of the Russian republic wedged between Poland and Lithuania that borders on the Baltic.

Mrs. Prunskiene condemned Mr. Gorbachev's demands for the surrender of personal weapons in Lithuania and for closer scrutiny of foreigners traveling here as violations of the republic's sovereignty. She denounced Moscow's continued displays of its military might as "a provocation."

She called the Government standoff

# tics as Armed Convoy Rolls By

"a clear crisis that we can emerge from only through negotiations, and these negotiations should begin immediately."

Even after the show of force today, the overwhelming majority of residents interviewed in Vilnius said the Lithuanian government should not retreat from its program of independence.

"The Soviet Union has always believed in the law of the wolf — the strongest wins," said Meile Kirdaite, a 55-year-old pensioner, scoffing at the column of military vehicles. "But we believe in the law of the right, and we believe we have morality and justice on our side. We have no intention of being frightened into submission."

## 25,000 Registered Hunters

At hunting clubs and on the streets, people said they had no intention of obeying the order to turn in personal weapons. They described the demand as insulting.

The Lithuanian Interior Minister, Maronis Mesiukonas, estimated today that there were 25,000 registered hunters in the republic. He said that 29,000 personal hunting guns were registered, most of them shotguns. He said he had received no reports of any the weapons being used against Soviet installations in the republic or against opponents of independence.

Algimantis Cekuolis, a newspaper editor and aide to the Lithuanian President, Vytautas Landsbergis, described the decree as "an insult to the people of Lithuania."

"Everyone is entitled to own arms, if he uses them responsibly," Mr. Cekuolis said. "And the implication here is that Lithuanians cannot be trusted with their own personal weapons, even though the republic is calm and restrained. This is worse than absurd. This is a provocation aimed at arousing fear in people all over the Soviet Union."

Many Vilnius residents complained that by issuing ominous decrees and focusing its television reports on the creation of an unarmed self-defense committee, Moscow was trying to portray a republic on the verge of violence.

"They are using the media to distort the situation here," said Birute Bautrenaite, a Lithuanian doctor. "Who is bringing out weapons? Not us, only Moscow."

In interviews in Vilnius, where about half the population is non-Lithuanian, it was clear that residents, while resolute, were distraught over the pressure



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Soviet troops put on a show of strength in Vilnius.

from Moscow.

The Soviet campaign appears to have succeeded particularly in stirring fears among people of other ethnic groups, many of whom had previously been more sympathetic toward the local drive for independence.

"Am I suddenly going to become a second-class citizen?" asked Lyudmila Uzvorskaya, a Russian factory worker. "I'm afraid that the whole republic will fall into chaos, and we Russians will be the first to be blamed and the first to suffer."

Several Lithuanians said that a rally on Sunday of Russians and Poles calling for continued Soviet rule had been staged by Moscow. They charged that Moscow had recruited non-Lithuanians from outside the republic to take part in the event, which was broadcast at length on Soviet television.

## Out-of-Town Plates

"We went to their rally on Sunday, and we looked at the cars and the buses that brought everybody, and most of the license plates were from Byelorussia, Kaliningrad and the Ukraine," said Anna Petkeviciene, 60 years old. "They are importing trouble for us."

In their work today, members of the Lithuanian Parliament appeared to be deliberately ignoring the foreboding tone of Mr. Gorbachev's decrees as they pressed ahead with the work of forming a new government and remodeling the state structure.

The mundane deliberations included a lengthy but inconclusive debate on how to run television, which up to now had been centrally controlled.